

"THE Isthmian League is not as good as it was," said Wycombe Wanderers vice-chairman Brian Lee at the club's annual meeting in July.

Confirmation of Mr Lee's comments then, came at Wexham Park on Tuesday night when Wycombe and Slough — two deadly rivals — played out one of the duller and most undistinguished matches it has been my misfortune to witness.

This local derby match is usually a hot blooded affair with plenty of passion and

Slough Town 0, Wycombe Wands 0,

Report by MICHAEL KNOX

excitement. Yet on Tuesday night the sides seemed frightened of each other and managed just two shots on target between them in 90 minutes.

That both those efforts came from Slough points to an abysmal performance by the Wycombe forwards. And so it was — but not without its excuses.

Stewart Atkins, whose return after five weeks of injury had

sparked the Blues to score seven goals in three games, was once again on the sidelines. In every game so far he has felt a twinge of his hamstring injury and manager Andy Williams decided to rest him as a precaution.

Into the side came Les Reid, whose only previous league experience this season came when he was brought on as substitute at Barking. To be frank Reid, a former Watford Reserves, looked out of his depth.

He lacked speed and skill in this company and it was no sur-

prise when he was taken off to be replaced by the recovered Terry Scott in the 61st minute. Considering how badly the rest of the team had been playing, it says little for his display that he was the one called off.

INJURIES

Wycombe's poor display can be explained by a series of injuries which brought about a defensive reshuffle. John Maskell was still out with a pinched nerve in his leg, while Paul Birdseye had not recovered from the back injury he suffered against Hitchin.

To add to their problems, left back Bobby Davies was taken ill on the day of the match. Alan Phillips returned to join Keith Mead at the centre of the back while Steve Hardwick went to left back. John Priestley took over Birdseye's position on the right.

It took some time for this defensive formation to settle down and Slough went desperately close to scoring in the first five minutes with their best chance of the night.

The tall Barry Metcalfe, completely unmarked, headed firmly towards goal from close range. Peter Spittle got down well to make a fine half-save but there were doubts raised that he should have cut out the original cross.

Once Wycombe had overcome these uneasy early moments, when it looked as though they might be overrun, they settled down and the rest of the match was dominated by both defences.

HIGH BOUNCE

Forwards were not helped by the unusually high bounce on a pitch that was badly in need of rain. The ball became almost impossible to control and as neither side wasted time in the tackle, attacking opportunities were rare.

But the pitch offered no excuses for the abysmal distribution of both sides. Very rarely were three consecutive passes strung together — and these usually came from Slough. Wycombe's main attacking ploy seemed to be 'hit and hope'.

SLOUGH: R. Teale; T. Turl, R. Mackay, I. Cooke, R. Strong, J. Beyer, B. Metcalfe, A. Gane, P. Lee, B. Friend, D. Russell. Sub: M. Kiely (not used).

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle; J. Priestley, A. Phillips, K. Mead, S. Hardwick, D. Allanson, L. Reid sub: T. Scott 61 mins), M. Hollifield, D. Evans, H. Kennedy, S. Long.

Referee: D. J. Cullen (Watford).

BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enfield	16	10	2	4	30	14	32
Croydon	13	9	1	3	29	15	28
Wycombe	16	8	4	4	26	14	28
Hendon	16	8	4	4	26	23	28
Leatherhead	14	8	2	4	26	11	26
Dulwich	13	7	5	1	17	7	26
Barking	13	7	4	2	34	22	25
Woking	14	6	5	3	26	20	23
Hitchin	15	7	2	6	21	23	23
Dagenham	15	7	2	6	21	24	23
Walthamstow	13	7	1	5	22	14	22
Boreham Wood	14	6	4	4	19	14	22
Slough	12	5	3	4	10	10	18
Tooting	16	5	3	8	20	25	18
Oxford	13	4	3	6	16	26	15
Hayes	14	3	5	6	17	25	14
Staines	13	3	3	7	14	23	12
Tilbury	14	3	2	9	18	36	11
Sutton	14	2	3	9	12	23	9
Kingston	13	2	3	8	9	22	9
Carshalton	13	0	7	6	13	23	7
Leytonstone	12	1	2	9	8	20	5

Injury-hit Blues need some rain

AS the bone hard pitches take their toll of injuries, Wycombe boss Andy Williams is just one out of many managers and players praying for a sudden end to this Indian summer, writes MICHAEL KNOX.

Sprained ankles, torn ligaments and pulled muscles are all aggravated by the hard ground, which also makes close ball control almost impossible, as was shown by Tuesday's match at Slough.

Mr Williams will be hoping desperately for some rain before Wanderers entertain Walthamstow Avenue tomorrow (Saturday), although the Loakes Park pitch is considerably better than most with a cushion of grass.

Blues are almost certain to be without Stewart Atkins, undergoing intensive treatment on

his hamstring, while four other players — John Maskell (pinched nerve), Paul Birdseye (back injury), Bobby Davies (temperature) and Steve Long (sprained ankle) — must all be rated as doubts.

But believe it or not, Walthamstow have been even harder hit by injury and this explains their slip down the table in recent weeks.

EIGHT OUT

For last Saturday's FA Cup-tie with Southern Leaguers Gravesend, Avenue were without eight regular first teamers. Not surprisingly they went down 3-2.

Certain to miss the Wycombe game are Barry Walder and Barry Lock, both with broken cheekbones caused, not by the pitch, but by aerial collisions.

Also likely to be out are defender Ted Majoram (ankle ligaments) and Steve Hamberger (chipped ankle bone). However, they hope to be able to call on the services of Alan Hunter, recovering from a strained side and John Webberley, better after a cartilage problem.

This preview has read like a medical bulletin, but the situation is unlikely to change unless it rains heavily in the near future.